

A Bitter Retribution

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Summary: Severus Snape made many bad choices. He also made a few good ones. In the end, it did not matter. Nothing mattered to Severus, for he had lost his Lily forever. One-shot.

A Bitter Retribution

Something Severus Snape had observed over the years is that people very rarely look up. It wasn't just witches and wizards either, muggles and squibs did it too. They looked down at the things below them, or at least the things they thought were below them. Just like in the food chain, humans liked to position themselves at the very top regardless of whether they belonged there.

>Humans refused to believe that another person might be more important than themselves, so they looked down. Down at their co-workers. Down at their neighbours dog. Down at their friends and even down at their family.<p>

Even if someone's eyes were pointed upwards, they were still looking down. Severus could testify to this personally, as he was a tall man and always had been. When he was at Hogwarts he often towered over his peers yet people like Potter and Black has still managed to look down on him.

However Severus did not observe all this from Potter and his gang; he first saw it in his father. Tobias Snape had found it just as easy to look down, being a rancorous man taller than Severus was today. Tobias looked down at people so fiercely that when Severus was younger he thought his father's hooked nose had been shaped by the earthward gazes that were shot down it. This had always made it incredibly difficult for Severus to meet his father's eye, looking at the floor instead. So, as it turned out, Tobias ended up inadvertently teaching his son to look down as well.

Severus has grown used to this for the longest time, accepting the fact that humans were snide creatures and always would be. It seemed that humans were doomed to ostensible superiority.

Only then Severus met someone different; a bright flame-headed girl that rebelled against societies wills through the simple action of looking up. Severus had watched her for the first time as she played in the park. He had been watching long enough to know that her sister had gone home an hour ago, but still the girl stayed. He watched her swing on the swing set, trying to get higher each time. He did not see the point; nothing waited up there for her. Not that he would know, he had never looked up before.

But this time, as she soared off the swing set and reached upwards for the sky, he followed her gaze and stared at the heavens, trying to see what she saw. What he saw was blazing sunlight force clouds, staining the sky glorious shades of gold, russet and peach. He saw everything that could be good about everyone that could be good. He felt a mother's love, he tasted the morsel given to a stranger, he saw a brave man sacrifice himself for another. All of it was up there and she was part of it.

Suddenly Severus yearned for something he never had before. He yearned to always look up as she did, to play in the stars with her. But he could not, for he was a selfish boy that had grown up under the dark influences of his father. Only now Severus wondered how Tobias could ever look down when there was so much brilliance in the sky above. The little ginger girl had made him question his family. She made him question himself.

So when he finally talked to her, naturally everything had to go wrong. He knew it as he knew that they would never look upon the same place, for she stared at the stars and he stared at the rocks. But when she looked up and he looked down, he realised something. While their gaze would never rest on the same place, their gazes would meet each other in the middle, and just like that the emerald spark embedded itself into the dark obsidian. And no matter how hard Severus tried to rid himself of it, the spark would never leave.

But Lily Evans was the only one, an aberration from witches and wizards and muggles and squibs. Different from all of them, yet something to be treasured above all else.

So when Severus was choking on his own blood, slumped on the floor of a derelict shack while a battle raged some distance away, he was not surprised to find the face of his childhood enemy peering down at him. He had known that Potter would crawl back to haunt him eventually. But James Potter had hurt Severus too much for Severus to just lie there, splayed across the splintered floor. Potter had committed the worst crime of all " taking Lily from him. Severus had kept the spark though; that could never be seized from him.

So, with a terrible effort, Severus forced himself upwards and seized the front of Potter's robes. He stared at Potter's face with fierce loathing, so strong it could have burnt a hole through stone. But Severus hesitated " something was off. Something wasn't quite as it usually was" and Severus realised it wasn't James' face after all, but the face of his son. Lily's son. Severus flinched when he saw an expression similar to the one he had just felt on Harry's face. Lily's son hated him, and it was too late to fix it. No no no no no, it couldn't end like this! Harry had to know. He had to know.

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>So Severus dredged up every thought and feeling he had ever held for the woman who had birthed the boy in front of him, and let it pour out of him. The substance of the memories flowed from every orifice, a silvery blue colour even though Severus thought it should have been bright emerald or burnt sienna.
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'Take â€¦ it â€¦ Take â€¦ it â€¦' Severus rasped, trying and failing to cough out the blood that pooled in his throat.

Harry looked at the substance with both recognition and confusion, doubtlessly unsure what to do. _Take it! _Severus urged, but he was too weak to produce anything but a foul gurgling sound. Finally the bushy-haired mudblood beside Harry handed him a vial, but Severus could not recall her name. Harriett? Heather? It did not matter.

Severus watched as Harry used his wand to lift the memories into the vial, a small crease appearing in his forehead as he concentrated. The boy was too precious, too young, but he had to know. He deserved to know.

The pain in Severus' neck from when Nagini had struck him was fading, and he let out a small puff of air in relief as his mind entered a blissful numbness. It was going to be over soon. So soon. Severus thought to close his eyes so he would not have to look up James Potter's likeness. After all, Harry did look exactly like his father, except for the eyes â€¦ Lily's eyesâ€¦ He could not die before seeing those eyes just one last time.

'Look â€¦ at â€¦ me â€¦' whispered Severus.

Harry turned his head, and Severus lips curved weakly as emerald met obsidian once more. He would see her soon, very soon. And with that last thought, all of Severus' pain disappeared.

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><p>Severus had not expected death to be so ... bright. He had thought it would be dark and musky, similar to the unsettling homeliness of the Slytherin Common Room. Instead he was faced with blinding white that burned an impression on the backs of his eyelids. He was in a very large room â€" or at least that's what he thought it must be. Its boundaries were not visible, nor was the roof. Severus could only see white floor for fifty meters around him before it seemed to dissolve into mist. He was uncomfortable; the brightness hurt his eyes and the place lacked familiarity.<p>

Yet it was worth it, for what he saw next made the seventeen years of waiting in pain fade into distant memory. His Lily. Severus' breath caught in his throat as he saw the woman he had pined over for so long. Tears rose to his eyes, tears that had been shed all too often ever since that fateful night.

She was captured perfectly in the still white room â€" a curtain of dark red falling across soft pale skin, the brightness of the blinding white catching on the tips of her auburn lashes. She had not aged a day, just as she could have belonged to any era of time and still be considered the most beautiful human to have ever crossed the earth. She even had that beloved expression of fury on her face â€" one that Severus only loved because up until seventh year that glare

had always been directed at Potter.

But once again Severus found himself realising that something was off. It did not take long before he knew what it was. This time Lily's fury was directed at himself. He tried to think what he might have done to upset her, but only succeeded in making himself upset, because he knew there were too many reasons for her to be glaring at him with such loathing.

'Lily â€‘' Severus began, cutting off suddenly when he felt a sharp stinging pain flare across his left cheek.

Lily lowered her palm, her bottom lip quivering with raw anger and her cheeks flushed deep scarlet.

'How dare you treat my son that way,' she said quietly.

Severus would have preferred it if she yelled at him. The way her melodic voice had sounded so bitter and more dangerous than anything he had ever heard before, yet she said it in a way that made Severus feel so _worthless._

Lily Potter turned on her heel and calmly walked back to her husband, and Severus knew who she had chosen. He had lost his Lily forever, and he knew that it didn't matter what side he chose anymore. Voldemort or humanity, she wouldn't care.

He was nothing to her.

But she was everything to him.

End
file.